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TALES TOLD AT TWILIGHT

BY

KATHERINE M. ILIFFE

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F.J.B.

"They searched the woodland through and through" *page 45*

TALES TOLD AT TWILIGHT

BY

KATHERINE M. ILIFFE

ILLVSTRATED BY P.J. BILLINGHVRST

NEW YORK
HOWARD WILFORD BELL
259 FIFTH AVENUE
1904

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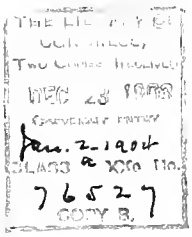
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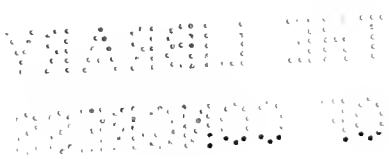
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[Author's dedication]

TO THE

MARQUESS OF BLANDFORD

AND

LORD IVOR CHARLES SPENCER CHURCHILL

SONS OF HER GRACE THE

DUCHESS OF MARLBOROUGH

Blenheim Palace, Woodstock,
16 *Aug.*, 1903

Dear Madam,

I am directed by the Duchess of Marlborough — who is leaving home early to-morrow morning for some weeks — to acknowledge your letter of the 11*th inst. and at the same time to say she will be very pleased to grant your request.*

Her Grace would like to see a copy of the book when it is published.

I am Dear Madam
yrs. faithfully
H. M. Holdsworth

Miss K. M. Iliffe
13, *Warnborough Road*
Oxford

[Publisher's dedication]

TO ALPHEUS AND DOROTHY

THE THREE RINGS

Hundred thousand years ago—
'Twas once upon a time you know—
There lived a good old King;
I shouldn't wonder if you guess
That there was too a young princess
As sweet as flowers in spring.

She'd lovely golden curling hair,
Her cheeks were rose and lily fair,
And deepest blue her eyes,
Her voice was like the sound of harps—
You've learnt, my dears, your flats and sharps—
And she was wondrous wise.

She'd satin shoes and silken gowns
And several different kinds of crowns
To wear upon her head;
She brushed her curls with peacocks' wings
And tied them back with silver strings
Before she went to bed.

"A dragon breathing flame" *page 11*

Her friends all loved her very much,
For her learning, dears, they say was such,
They couldn't teach her more;
And she saved her money in a box
That fastened up with diamond locks
And gave it to the poor.

Alas, like us she'd troubles too.
A horrid monster came to woo,
A dragon breathing flame!
The trees he passed were burnt and black,
The ponds dried up along his track,
As through the land he came.

He went to Court. The King turned pale.
The dragon coughed and squirmed his tail,
And this is what he said:
"I want your daughter for my wife
And if, good sir, you'd keep your life
You'd better let us wed."

"But she is young and I've much to do,
I'll call again in a year or two;
I'm the patientest of men.
But be prepared; I'll burn you up
And on your bones I'll surely sup,
If she won't have me then."

The Princess nearly died with fright,
She sighed all day, she sobbed all night—
My dears, we'd do the same—
Her cheeks grew pale, her eyes grew red,
She vainly wished that she'd been dead
Before the monster came.

At last she was so ill and weak
Her friends could scarcely hear her speak;
The King seemed dying too.
When things are worst, good people say,
Fate smiles and blows the clouds away;
In this case it was true.

One night the Princess slept and dreamed,
And after that the whole world seemed
A very different place.
Once more she talked and walked and ate,
She sang all day and laughed at fate
And all the dragon race.

She'd many lovers, princes bold;
Some woo'd for love and some for gold,
As happens now, my dears;
She didn't tell her dream, but said
A nice young prince she thought she'd wed,
'Twas no good waiting years.

The good old King rejoiced to see
Her blue eyes brimming full of glee
When lovers came in crowds.
She said she'd wed the prince who won
Two golden rings, from Moon and Sun,
Another from the clouds.

These poor young men turned rather green
And all but one retired in spleen;
E'en his brave heart was sore.
But lightened by a tear and smile
He traveled many a lonely mile
And searched the kingdom o'er,

Till weak and faint with lack of food
He turned into a shady wood
And laid him down and prayed
To fairy, genie, pixy and sprite,
To all who love and do the right
To come and lend him aid;

Then slept. But soon he ope'd his eyes
And started up in wild surprise,
There stood a Genie near.
He took one look, then ran away—
He wasn't very brave, you say?—
But Genies, chicks, are queer.

"There stood a Genie near" *page 14*

They're awfully big, with saucer eyes,
And when they stretch their limbs and rise
    You'd think a mountain moved.
But big and ugly things, you see,
Aren't made up of ferocity,
    As in this case it proved.

He spoke—'twas like a thunder storm—
"My dear young man, it's scarce good form
    To run away like that;
Besides you'll never win your bride
If you for trifles turn aside."
    He smiled and waved his hat.

The prince felt rather shaky still
But bravely turned and said, "I'm ill
    For want of rest and food.
Perhaps, sir, you'll be very kind
And tell me where the rings to find;
    I'm sorry I was rude."

The Genie laughed. "I'll tell you where,
But you must first comb out my hair."
'Twas in great knots and long.
Our hero combed, the thunder crashed,
He pulled a hair, the lightning flashed,
But love makes weak men strong.

At last 'twas done, each hair was free.
I wish we'd all been there to see
A sight so wondrous rare;
It floated over rocks and trees
Like the black clouds the night wind frees.
The Genie took a hair.

"Go straight ahead, my noble prince,
And take this hair; I'll help you since
I see you'll help yourself.
Don't leave this path for fear or pride,
It twists and turns but will safely guide
To a distant rocky shelf.

"Beneath this shelf, in a shady pool,
All wading in its waters cool
You'll see three herds of kine:
The white cows' home is in the sun,
The jet black cows come from the moon,
The cloud cows golden shine.

"Each browsing herd is led by one;
To meet the leaders straightway run
And wave the hair I gave;
From each right horn quick take a ring,
Then swiftly haste back to the King
Your lady's life to save."

The Genie vanished out of sight,
And the prince's heart thrilled with delight
As on the way he sped.
He found the rock, the pool, the kine,
Their leaders decked with jewels fine,
Just as the Genie said.

To Court he turned and in toil-worn dress
Knelt low before his dear Princess,
Still safe in her father's home.
She took the rings and proudly said,
"We'll marry now, I'm not afraid,
E'en though the dragon come."

The King rejoiced and bade them bake
A most magnificent wedding cake,
The largest ever seen;
The wedding gown was pearl and gold,
With a satin train for a page to hold.
The pages all wore green.

The Moon-King's ring, too, decked the bride,
And I could not tell you if I tried
Of all the feasts and joy;
And when they'd wedded been a year,
There came a little baby there,
A most uncommon boy.

He talked at once and walked alone,
And tossed about great balls of stone;
    He was but seven days old
When rocks too much for horses ten
Down hill and vale and up again
    Quite easily he rolled.

Next year the Sun-King's ring she wore,
And then another boy she bore
    More clever than the last;
He walked and talked at once the same,
And when he willed he breathed out flame,
    Which burnt up all it passed.

Another year and the Cloud-King's ring
Another bonny boy did bring,
    Who talked and walked and ran,
And from his mouth great balls could blow
Which far and straight and sharp would go
    And kill the strongest man.

The dragon now, quite tired of strife,
Thought he would settle down in life,
So came back to the court.
"Where is the sweet Princess?" roared he,
You'd better bring my bride to me,
My temper's rather short."

The Princess straightway called her sons,
They'd neither clubs, nor swords, nor guns,
But each was fully armed.
"Go out, brave boys, and fight the beast,
He cannot hurt you in the least,
You need not be alarmed."

The eldest hurled a monstrous stone,
The dragon quivered and gave a groan
Although his hide was tough;
The second breathed and burnt him sore,
The third boy shot and made him roar
And feel he'd had enough.

He crawled away to his noisome den,
And they say he never came back again;
And when the King was dead,
The people asked these princes brave
Who had used their powers the land to save
To be their kings instead.

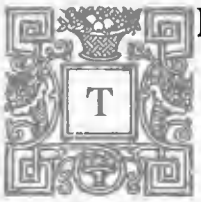
But ere my tale is ended quite
Its moral I'll try to bring to light,
Don't run away just yet;
The beast who tried a wife to win
Reminds us of the power of sin,
And I hope you'll not forget

That sin sneaks back to his wretched lair
When boldly faced by the folk who dare
To strike him with their might;
Should you be tempted some wrong to do
'Twill make him quiver through and through
If you bravely do the right.

And loving kindness shown to those
Who hate and harm us surely goes
To heap up coals of fire
Upon sin's head; while truth we know
Gives him at once as sharp a blow
As good men can desire.

So you can do as these princes did,
Strive of a monster the land to rid,
Will you, as well as they?
Will you get courage and love and truth
Now, as you live through the days of your youth?
My darlings, what do you say?

THE PARTING OF EARTH AND HEAVEN



HE world is growing old now,
But when 'twas very young
It hadn't many people
Whose stories could be sung.

It had its hills and valleys,
Its rivers, lakes and seas.
In its lovely woods and gardens
Flew butterflies and bees.

The birds were there, and fishes,
The cows and horses, too;
But as for men and women,
And boys and girls like you,

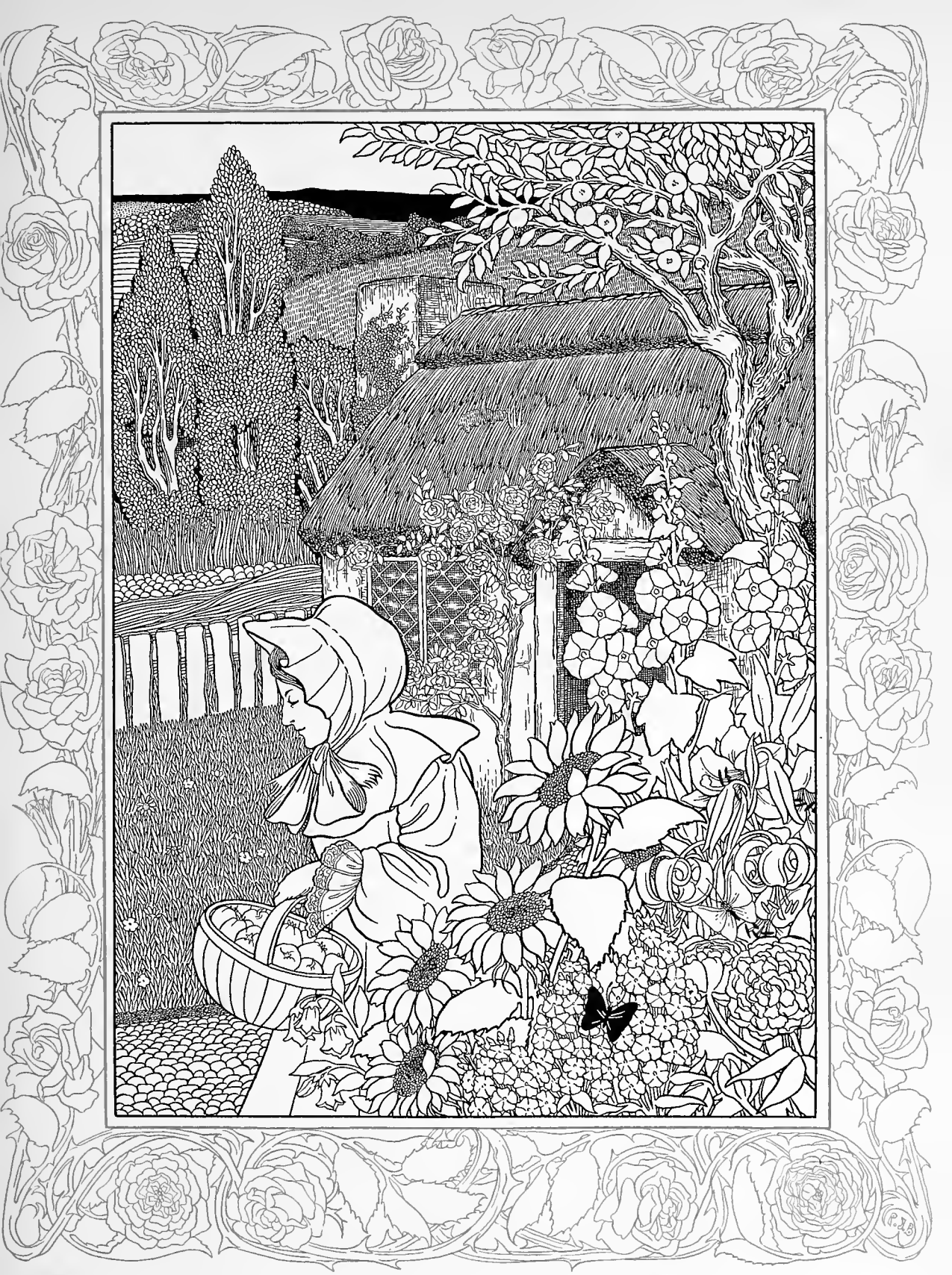
There was only one old couple—
Their names were Earth and Heaven—
Who lived with their five children.
Five and two make? . . . Seven.

That wasn't many, was it?
How lonely it must be
When you see no other children
And you can't go out to tea.

Their home was a rose-clad cottage
Beside a flowing stream
In a sweet and shady garden,
All lovely as a dream.

You'd think they might be happy
And find enough to do,
But those five were naughty children,
Not a bit, I know, like you.

They all were boys and quarrelled
From morning's dawn to night;
If three were sitting silent
Then two would surely fight.



"Their home was a rose-clad cottage" *page 28*

They said the worst was Sun-King,
The eldest boy they had,
But number three, the Wind-King,
Was really quite as bad.

The youngest, called the Cloud-King,
Was good when left alone;
But there was also Fire-King
And the moment he came home

He drove the weaker Cloud-King
Straight at the Wind-King's head;
Between the two poor Cloud-King
Was often nearly dead.

The second boy was Moon-King,
And now I think you know
The names of all the children
Who plagued their parents so.

In spite of this they loved them,
And tried to make them good;
I know I should have whipped them.
But Heaven never would.

'Twas worse as they grew older.
I'm really quite ashamed
To tell the naughty things they did,
And each the others blamed.

At last poor Earth and Heaven
Went off one summer day
To another house and garden
A hundred miles away.

They left the five behind them
And settled down in peace,
Hoping that now forever
Their misery would cease.

But the boys searched out and found them,
Again their peace was gone,
It would take too long to tell you
All those wicked boys had done.

They didn't wish to quarrel,
At least that's my idea,
But it seemed they couldn't help it
If each other they were near.

So Sun-King said one morning,
"Don't you think it would be best
If Moon and I and Heaven
Were parted from the rest?"

This grieved poor father Heaven,
The prospect was so drear,
And Earth spoke, pale and trembling,
"We'll not be parted, dear."

She laid one hand in his hand,
The other smoothed his hair,
"We have always been together,
I should die without your care."

The boys refused to listen,
They clearly meant to part;
To them it didn't matter
About a broken heart.

So Heaven and Earth consented,
In spite of bitter pain,
And the poor old pair were parted,
Never to meet again.

The Earth took Cloud and Fire,
With Heaven the others went;
And you'll know how far from Heaven
The poor sad Earth was sent,

If on a sunny morning
  You look up to the skies
And see the sun there shining,
  How far away it lies.

Now, when the Sun in setting
  Throws a soft crimson glow
Around Earth's pure white Cloudlets
  He means, I think, to show

That he's very, very sorry
  He made her go away;
It must make Earth feel happier
  To see it day by day.

I'm glad that Earth had Fire,
  Or we'd have been so cold,
And I'm pretty sure this story
  Would never have been told.

You fancy clouds are doubtful
  Because they hold the rain,
But surely, little children,
  Of that we won't complain.

Just see how very beautiful,
  Like mountains piled with snow,
They look on summer afternoons,
  And the shadows that they throw

On mountain, lake and valley
  Make pictures quite sublime;
Be sure you think to watch them
  When you're out next summer-time.

The Sun and Moon still quarrelled,
  While Wind danced round in glee;
That it wasn't nice for Heaven
  We can pretty plainly see.

I often used to wonder
What made the sky look blue.
It must have been those naughty boys,
I really think, don't you?

After a thousand years or so
The Sun-King took a bride,
Which made the Moon so jealous,
For days and nights he cried.

The Sun-bride's hair was golden,
Just threads of living light,
The loveliest curls we see now
Are nothing like so bright.

Then Moon looked out for a maiden
With shining golden hair,
He searched for many weary months
But found none anywhere.

In truth there wasn't another
In all the wide, wide world,
But he met a maid with hair that flowed
Like a silver flag unfurled.

He asked her if she'd marry,
She said she did not mind,
And I must say as a husband
Moon turned out very kind.

The Sun-Queen said, "How pretty"
When she the Moon-Queen saw,
But they ne'er drank tea together
Or went out shopping, for

The Sun-Queen told her husband
Moon's house was very small,
And though his wife was pretty
She didn't mean to call.

Time passed, then Sun and Moon Kings
Were both in great distress,
But what there was the matter
I'm sure you'd never guess.

Just like a certain lady
Who lived within a shoe
They had so many children
They didn't know what to do.

The Sun-King cried, "Let's kill them,"
The Moon said, "You begin
And I'll be glad to follow,
They're making such a din."

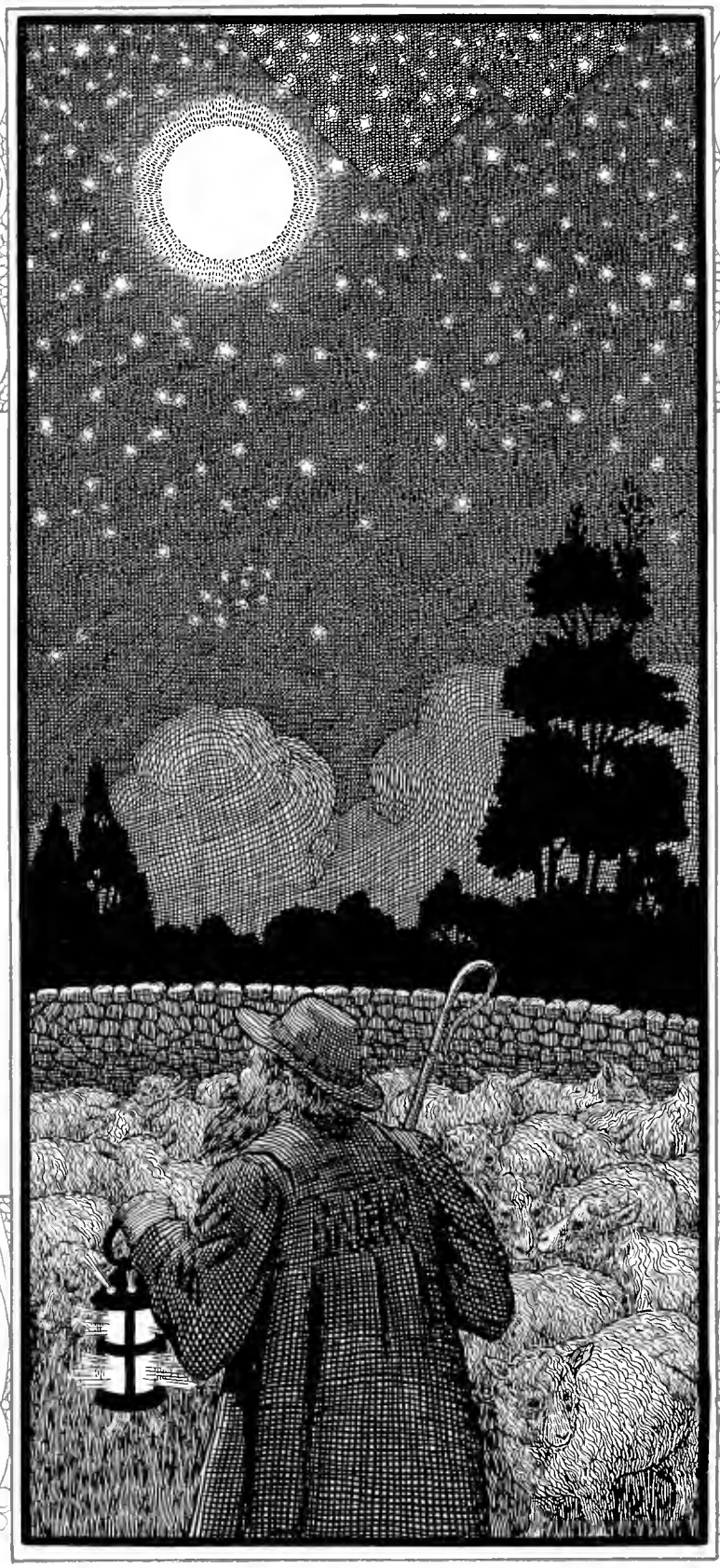
So Sun killed all his children,
Though their mother moaned and cried;
'Twas more than she could bear, poor thing,
And soon of grief she died.

Moon's children still are living
  Because he loved his wife
And he feared that if he killed them
  She, too, would lose her life.

The Sun-King was so angry
  When Moon his children saved
That madly after them he tore
  And loudly, wildly raved,

That he'd catch them up and kill them.
  And that, my dears, is why
In the bright and sunny daytime
  No stars are in the sky.

The moment Sun has gone to rest
  Their father, Moon, you see;
Then crowds of his star-children
  Come dancing out in glee.



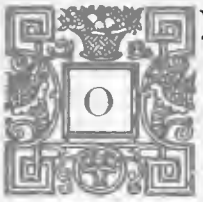
"Their father, Moon, you see" *page 39*

And when the Sun wakes up again
They hide themselves and peep
Until they're sure he's quite awake,
Then off they go to sleep.

Have you ever seen their mother?
She's very seldom there,
But you'll know her when you see her
By her train of silver hair.

So, children, ends the story,
A sad one 'tis I've sung,
How Earth and Heaven were parted
When all the world was young.

THE DISOBEDIENT WOLF



NE winter many years ago
The land for months was white with snow.
From day to day the cold grew keener
And birds and beasts grew daily leaner.
They searched the woodland through and through
And wondered sadly what to do,
When little food for weeks they'd had
And feared for weeks 'twould be as bad.
Of dinner now they never thought;
Sometimes a little supper brought
Home by the father towards the night
Would make the young ones' sleep more light.
The trees looked pretty, decked with rime,
But truly it was a dreadful time.
At last a young wolf desperate grew
And vowed that something he would do.

This happened, I am glad to say,
In a land that's very far away.

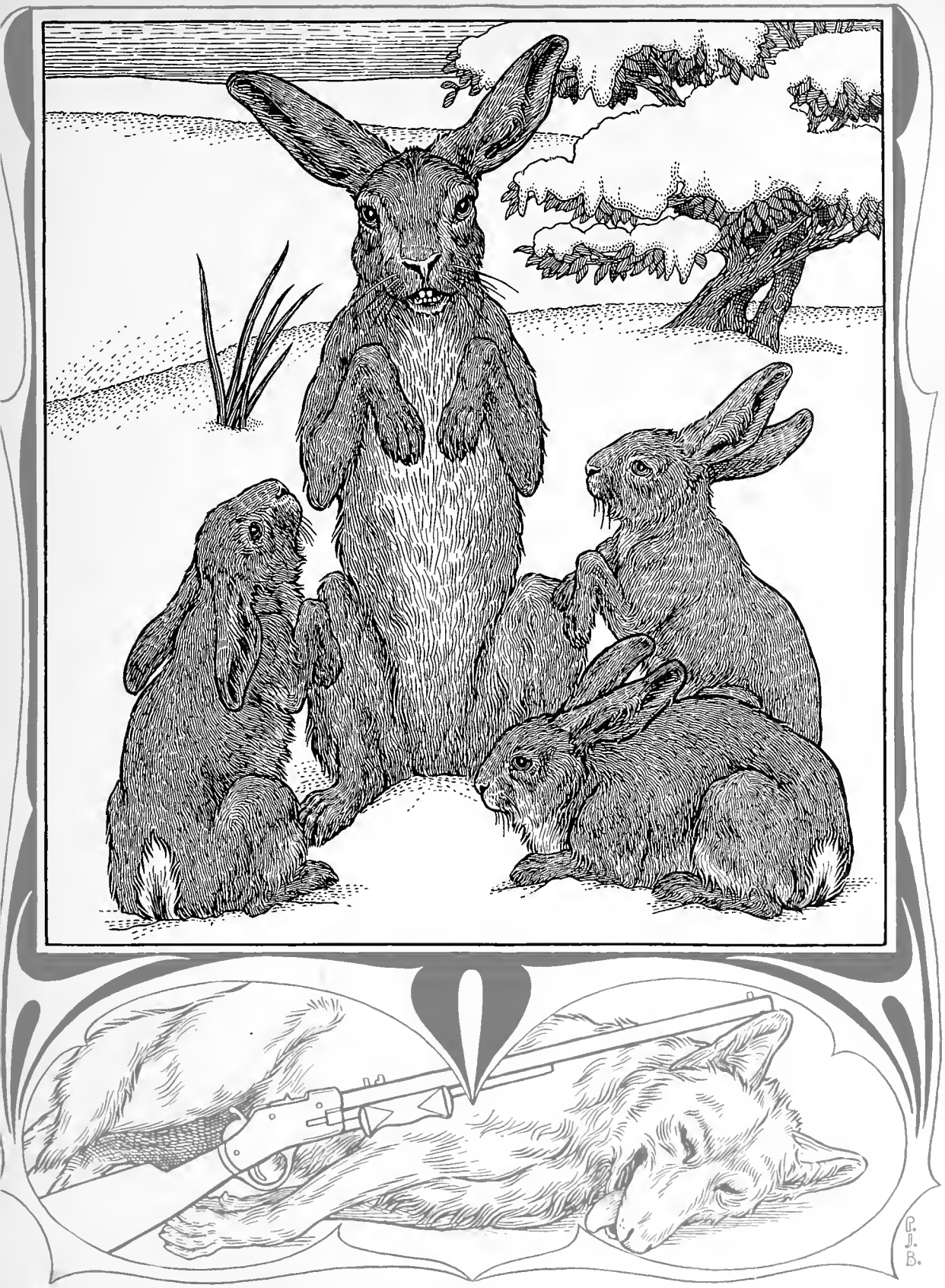
In England there are no wolves now;
I'm sure that you'll remember how
In early times a good king said
He'd give a pound for each wolf's head,
Because when hunger makes them wild
They're most unpleasant to meet, my child.

This desperate wolf told his papa
He meant to roam from woods afar
Where he a sheep or child might see;
If so, he'd bring it home for tea.
"You think you're very wise and old,"
The father said, "don't be too bold.
A race of beasts live in the town
Who point with sticks which knock us down.
Two of your uncles died that way,
So don't be rash, my boy, I pray.
Your mother, see, is looking sad,
I hope you'll listen to your dad."

The young wolf said, "What is the good
Of talking so; I must have food.
You needn't fret about it though,
I know exactly where to go."
He started off in highest spirit
Feeling himself a youth of merit,
And when he caught a limping hare
He thought himself beyond compare.
Poor puss was very thin and weak
But managed a few words to squeak,
"Good sir, you'd surely not eat me,
I'm skin and bone, 'tis plain to see.
If you'll be kind and let me go
A nice plump man to you I'll show.
He's in a field not far from here
Without another creature near."

The wolf held on and thought a minute,
"May be, you know, there's something in it.

The folks at home are far too wise,
I'll just give them a grand surprise."
Then thus he spoke, "Show me the man.
I'll let you go, sir, if you can,
But till we reach him, though he's near,
Between my teeth I'll keep your ear."
Thus together along they ran
Until before them stood the man.
"But why has he a stick in his hand?"
"Because he's weak and scarce can stand."
Thrilled with delight the wolf let go,
The hare's departure wasn't slow.
The wolf sprang, thinking, "Isn't this fun."
But the wary man had raised his gun.
A moment more and the wolf lay dead
Just as his wise old father said.
This the hare told his children without any pity
And at the young wolf's expense was exceedingly witty.



"The hare told his children without any pity" *page 48*

THE FIRST FIDDLE

N a beautiful far-away valley,
At the foot of high mountains of snow
On whose summit the daylight would linger,
As the light on yon cloud tips does now,

Stood a cottage as sweet as 'twas lonely,
In a garden all laden with flowers,
There were roses and sweet peas and lilies
Much larger and fairer than ours.

Beside it there murmured a river
Which sparkled and danced in the light—
If I went on describing forever
I couldn't say all that I might.

The eagles built high on the mountain,
The chamois skipped gay on its peaks,
And there grew the edelweiss flower,
Which the youth for his lady-love seeks.

Two people lived in the lone cottage,
As happy and busy as bees.
They had goats and a cow to look after,
And fuel to get from the trees.

Many folks who have riches and splendor
Are not so contented as they,
But one thing this couple still wished for
And often together they'd pray

That a boy or a girl might be sent them
To care for them when they grew old.
It is sad to be tended by strangers,
Loving kindness is better than gold.

One day on a bright sunny morning
To the cottage an old woman came,
Her frock was all tattered and dusty
And she seemed to be drooping and lame.

So the good-natured cottager brought her
  Some bread and a cup of fresh milk,
When the old woman turned to a fairy
  And the rags became satin and silk.

In fact 'twas the Queen of the Fairies
  And she showed herself then as a queen,
Her crown was of gold, set with rubies,
  And her wings had a soft pearly sheen.

The cottager's manners were pretty,
  Although she knew nothing of court,
And she curtsied quite low to the Fairy,
  As all who meet Royalty ought.

The Fairy was pleased with her kindness
  And said in a year and a day
She'd bring her a lovely boy baby,
  Who should grow up her old age's stay.

Then she vanished, and at once the glad woman
Ran to tell her good man what she'd seen,
And for the rest of the year was as happy
As if she herself were a queen.

And when with the roses in summer
The sweet bonny baby boy came
The whole earth seemed circled with glory
To the worthy old man and his dame.

They told him the fairies had brought him,
And if he did his best to be good
In time he'd be wealthy and famous
As the Fairy had promised he should.

They lived till he grew up to manhood
Then mother and father died too,
And the youth left alone in the valley
Sadly wondered what next he should do.

'Twas so lonely, at last he decided
To give up the goats and the cow
And, forsaking the quiet old homestead,
Wander forth as chance should allow.

All his life he had copied the music
Which he heard when the wind stirred the trees,
Which lived in the murmuring streamlet
And was borne on the soft summer breeze.

Of course there was no one to teach him,
But he'd fashioned a soft sounding lute
And by means of its strings spoke the music
Which deep in his soul had its root.

He wandered from city to city
And wonderful music he made,
But he didn't grow wealthy and famous,
Though it was pleasant to hear him, folks said.

"All his life he had copied the music" *page 57*

Then he came to a very grand castle
Where there lived a most lovely Princess,
And it chanced on that day he was playing
A pitiful wail of distress.

She heard it and told them to call him.
He went, very nervous and shy.
She asked him to tell her the reason
He had uttered so plaintive a cry.

He said he was heartsick and weary
With trying and trying in vain
To make people care for his music,
To find home and love once again.

The Princess looked at him so kindly,
The youth fell in love at first sight,
And asked if one day she would wed him;
She said that she would if she might.

But the King was not pleased that his daughter
Should marry a poor wand'ring lad,
And he fell in a furious temper,
And the fate of these lovers seemed sad,

For Rudolph was thrown into prison
Far away from the Princess so fair,
And thinking that all was now over
He flung himself down in despair.

Then a star seemed to light up the dungeon
And there stood the good Fairy Queen;
She had not forgotten her baby
And his troubles had all been foreseen.

She touched with her wand his hot forehead,
"Look up, do not grieve any more.
I know of your love for the Princess,
Look up, better things are in store

"And he fell in a furious temper" *page 60*

"You have striven your best and I'll help you.
The King many years ago said
That none but a clever inventor
His lovely young daughter should wed."

She lifted a small hollow casket
From a bag which she bore 'tween her wings,
Tied fast round her neck by a cobweb
Woven strong, like the tiny watch-springs.

Some hairs from her head then she gave him,
Which across it were carefully bound,
A little white stick was the next thing,
Round this too her long hairs she wound.

Then it turned to a beautiful fiddle,
This box that he held in his hand.
Such a wonderful way to make music
Wasn't dreamed of before in the land.

The Queen from the youth took the fiddle,
She breathed on it, laughed, and then cried,
And within it, hereafter, forever,
Mirth and sadness there dwelt, side by side.

"Strike your fiddle," she cried, and he played it
So that crowds flocked to hear the sweet sound.
Of course he was soon freed from prison,
And with riches his labors were crowned.

He still loved the beautiful Princess
And he'd made a most wonderful thing,
So he boldly went up to the Palace,
And mentioned these facts to the King.

The King could no longer despise him,
Though he did not approve of him quite.
He said if they liked they might marry,
And he hoped it would turn out all right.

Of course they lived happy for ever
As people in stories all do,
But what has become of the fiddle
I'm sorry to say I don't know.

PEGASUS

Wealthy merchant going to town —
He thought he'd take an airing —
Said to his girls, as he set out,
He'd bring them each a fairing,
Explaining business took him there,
Thus early in the season,
But I should say to see the fair
Was more than half the reason.

He'd daughters three; like many men
He found that number plenty.
His youngest girl was seventeen,
His eldest just turned twenty.
He kissed their cheeks and pinched their ears.
"Now tell me what you've chosen,
I'm glad I'm not like Neighbor Smith
With daughters half a dozen."

The eldest chose an apron smart,
As suited to her station.

The second thought a handkerchief
Would meet the situation.
The youngest chose a little box,
A present I think funny.
I don't know why she wanted it,—
Perhaps to hold her money.

The merchant went and saw the fair,
And would have been quite merry
As he rode home next afternoon
Upon his good horse Jerry.
He'd bought a scarf and apron too,
But buy a box he couldn't,
And he felt sad because his girl
Might fancy 'twas he wouldn't.

As thus he mused, a poor old man
Upon the wayside standing,
Held up a box, a tiny one,
And this the merchant handing,

Quoth he, "Good sir, I've with me here
The present for your daughter.
I hope she'll thank you when she sees
The pretty box you've brought her."

The merchant cried, "I'm much obliged.
Pray tell me what the price is."
He didn't mind how much it cost
At such a serious crisis;
But as he spoke the man was gone
Without the proffered money.
The merchant thought his eyes were dazed,
The afternoon was sunny.

But though surprised he rode along
Upon his way now gaily,
And when he'd seen his horse was fed—
This was his custom daily—
He gave the presents to his girls.
The young one's vexed her rather,

She took the box and sighed and said,
"It's very tiny, father."

The merchant of a proverb thought—
He was somewhat of a student—
"To look a gift-horse in the mouth
Is seldom very prudent."
But young folks have not found this out,
And it would be affectation
For them to meet the ills of life
With grown-up resignation.

She put it down. "I wish 'twere big!"
The words were scarcely uttered
Before the box enormous grew;
"It's very odd," she muttered,
"Why, now if I had but a horse
I'd make of it a carriage,
And drive it when we go next week
To cousin Amy's marriage."

A great black horse at once appeared,
His eyes all red and fiery,
With two great wings, which spread out wide.
And though the roads were miry,
His hoofs were clean, he'd not a speck
Of mud or dust upon him.
And near the box, now like a sledge,
Was harness to put on him.

A velvet robe lay in the sledge,
The girl of course must wear it.
And with his harness on, her steed
Began to show his spirit.
She took her seat; then maid and sledge
Went flying like a comet.
At first she thought it very grand
And got much pleasure from it.

But when the night was growing dark
And all around looked dreary,

"A great black horse at once appeared" *page 71*

She wished herself at home again;
Of driving she was weary.
At last she felt that she must cry,
Like Wonderland's fair Alice,
When suddenly her carriage stopped
Before a golden palace.

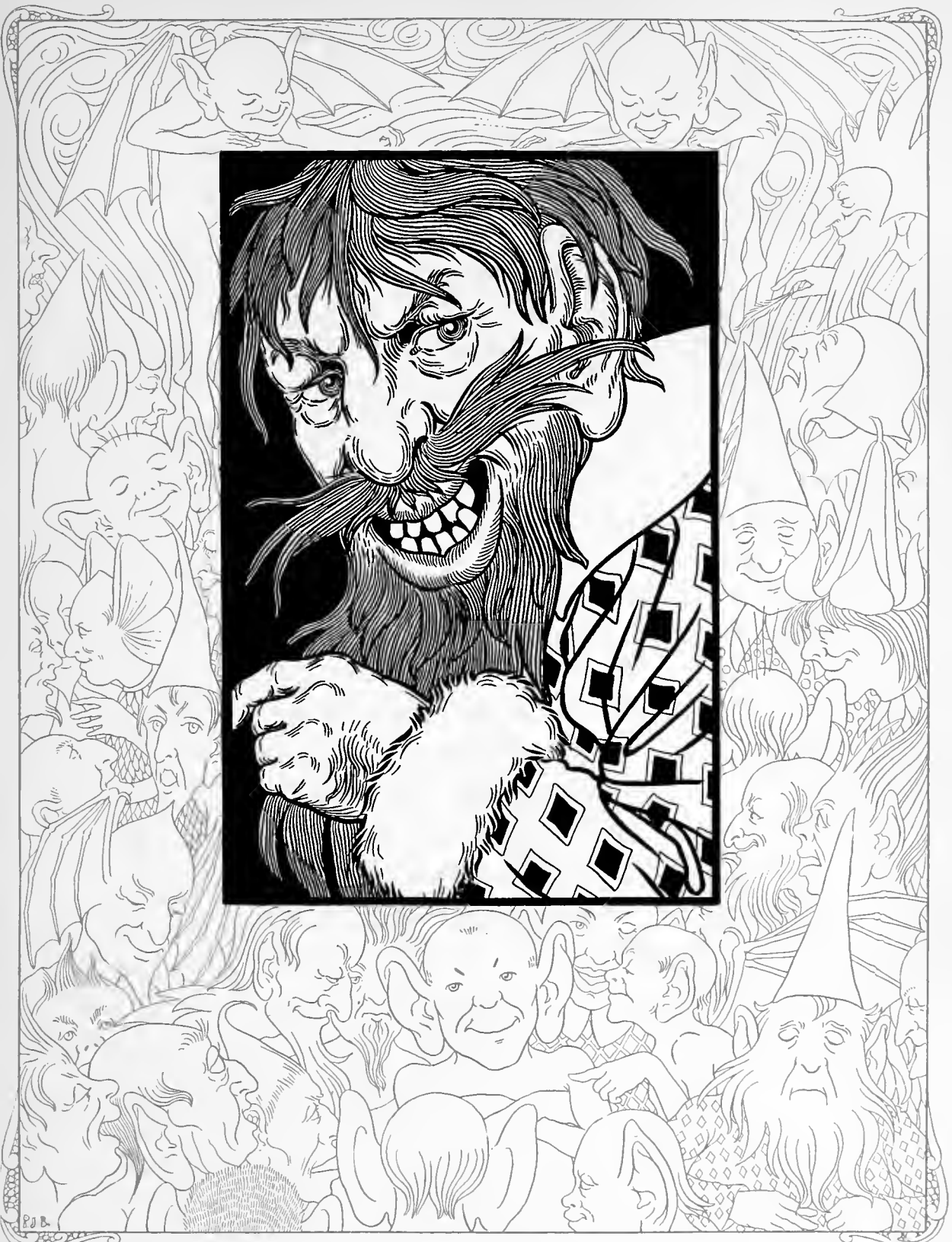
She stepped inside the open door,
And music soft came stealing
From out the hall, where on the floor
She saw a giant kneeling.
He begged and prayed she'd be his bride,
While love his dull face brightened;
The girl began to scream and cry,
Because she was so frightened.

But as she cried, the horse outside
With hoofs the ground was knocking,
And when at length the girl looked up
The change was truly shocking.

Her steed was now a handsome prince,
And the giant, who'd grown surly,
Rose up ten feet and slunk away,
Saying, "I'll come back early."

The Prince then told the fair young girl
How this cruel old magician
Had put him in what most would find
A very sad position.
By day he was a winged horse
Belonging to the Sun-King,
Who all day long would drive to find
Cool water for his drinking.

By night he was himself again
And so he begged the maiden
To stay and taste the lovely fruits
With which his trees were laden;
They talked and ate until the time
When daylight softly glowing



"And the giant, who'd grown surly" *page 74*

Reminded the unlucky prince
That he must soon be going.

Swift on his back he bore her home,
To both the young folks' sorrow,
But as they went she promised him
She'd see him on the morrow.
So every night her black horse came
And took her to the palace.
She heard again the Prince's tale
Of the magician's malice,

And many more most wonderful.
She saw gnomes, elves and fairies,
She learnt the names of all the beasts
That roam the woods and prairies.
While thus she led a glorious life
It puzzled much the sister,
Who from her pretty curtained bed
So frequently now missed her.

The Prince had told her, riding home,
From his mane to pluck a hair,
And this to burn whene'er she wished
Her winged steed to appear.
But not to tell the other girls
Or any living creature
That he became a prince by night,
With tears he did beseech her.

She promised, and she meant it too,
Although they teased about it.
"She could not tell them all," she said,
"They just must do without it."
But when her sister bothered still
The young girl told the story
Of magic power and palace gold,
And all the Prince's glory.

But scarcely had she finished, when
Outside they heard a roar;

Stamping his hoofs, the black horse stood
With his head inside the door.
"How could you break your word," he cried.
"Why did I trust a woman.
It's useless now to burn the hair
When you your steed would summon."

His snorts were wild, he tossed his mane;
The scene was most distressing.
At length he turned and tore away,
Which was perhaps a blessing.
And vainly now the maiden cried
And blamed her tiresome sister,
Forgetting quite that she had lacked
The patience to resist her.

She cried as she brushed out her hair
And curled it in the morning.
She cried while at her work she sat.
She cried from dusk to dawning.

Of course her sisters teased and laughed
  As folks who've had no trouble
So often do, forgetting that
  They make the burden double.

One day, afar from friend or foe,
  She walked beside the river,
Thinking about the Prince she loved
  And would now love forever.
She kissed the hair which from his mane
  The last glad time she'd taken,
And dropping it into the stream,
  Felt utterly forsaken.

Then thunder crashed and lightning flashed,
  And rocks were rent asunder.
If the poor girl had died of fright
  It would have been no wonder.
But scarcely had she time to scream
  Before there stood beside her

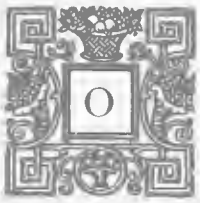
In his right shape the Prince she loved.
And now he did not chide her,

But told her not to be afraid,
For she the spell had broken.
Of course he quite forgave the words
That heedlessly she'd spoken.
And soon these two young folks were wed,
For the cruel old magician
Had lost his power to hurt the Prince
And alter his condition.

Their home was in the palace gold,
Amid gnomes, fays and elves,
And every one around they made
As happy as themselves.
And though they lived to be quite old
Their peace was never riven
By any further breach of trust,
And the first was quite forgiven.

So, children, though a fault be grave
And well deserved its sentence,
The path through life may still be cleared
By deep and true repentance.
And whatsoever sends things wrong,
By patience they'll be mended —
Dear me, is that a yawn I see?
'Tis well my tale is ended.

THE CAVE FAIRIES



NE day some lazy fisher boys,
Who'd seldom much to do,
Strolled into a rocky cavern
To see how far they could go.

The leader had a candle,
The cave was growing dark,
And gaily cried while lighting it,
"Now, boys, we'll have a lark."

But he hadn't gone much further
Before they heard a shout,
Something had fluttered past him
And blown his candle out.

Then they all ran helter-skelter,
As for their very life,
Back to the open seashore
And up the shingly cliff.

There one boy turned. "How silly
We were to be afraid!"
And soon they all felt brave again
And another venture made.

Groping along much further,
This time without a light,
In spite of all their courage
They had another fright.

For they heard two voices talking,
Though not the words they said,
And once again their courage failed
And they feebly turned and fled.

The next day was a Friday
And they took a barn-yard fowl
And turned him in the cavern,
But didn't tell a soul.

And when the folks on Sunday
  Were coming out of church,
They heard a cock's shrill crowing
  Just underneath the porch.

The fisher boys, too, heard it
  As they stood amongst the throng,
And knew at once the cavern
  Was nearly three miles long.

Next day, some others with them,
  They thought again they'd dare.
And now they knew for certain
  Some one was living there.

For food and cups and dishes
  Were scattered all around.
And when they'd gone a mile or so
  They heard a curious sound.

"And when the folks on Sunday" *page 87*

L of C.

Above a gentle murmur
A voice rose clear and high,
"Come, sister, don't be idle,
It's time we baked the pie."

Once more they ran, like cowards,
And fetched some grown-up men,
And when the tide had lowered
They all went back again.

The men walked on much further
Till they saw a great round stone
All neatly laid for dinner
With meat and cakes thereon.

And two most lovely fairies
Invited them to dine
And handed them the dainty fare
And poured out sparkling wine.

"They had another dinner" *page 91*

There wasn't any hurry,
  Because the tide was low,
And they were so very happy
  They did not want to go.

At last they said, "Good evening,
  It's growing late," and then
The two kind-hearted fairies said
  They soon must come again.

And now they knew the fairies
  Of course they'd lose their fear,
And the very next half-holiday
  Found men and boys all there.

They had another dinner,
  Even better than before;
And the good and gen'rous fairies,
  Who knew the men were poor,

Gave them food and money
To take back to their wives,
And taught them games and useful things
To brighten up their lives.

So the good folk of that hamlet
Were made both rich and glad,
But their fortune one day ended
In a fashion truly sad.

A man had a tiny baby
And told the fairies this.
One said, "I'll be its godmother.
Do bring it us to kiss."

But the mother was so selfish
She wouldn't let it go,
And said she hated fairies.
This vexed the fairies so

They wouldn't feed the men and boys
  Nor teach them any more.
And so they all grew poor again,
  And the fairies left their shore.

It really was a pity;
  It's such a splendid thing
To have a fairy godmother
  All sorts of luck to bring.

I only wish I'd had one,
  And so I'm sure do you,
If the tales one hears about them
  Are anything like true.

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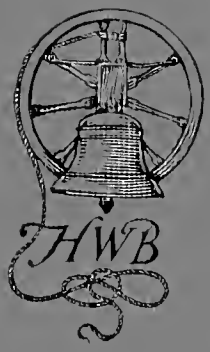
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